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ABSTRACT

This memo outlines the major features for a department-based program designed for the orientation and preparation of the apprentice college teacher. Guides for a training program include support and involvement by the department; the training program emphasizing preservice orientation, in-service training, and supervision; evaluating a department-based training program; and institutional support. A six-item bibliography is included. (MJM)

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THE APPRENTICE TEACHER

Memo to the Faculty

From the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching

The University of Michigan

NO. 51
MARCH 1973

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For the first time in a long time, the supply of teachers exceeds the demand. U–M doctoral graduates are finding jobs but with more scrambling about than five years ago. The research credentials of the Ph.D. may no longer, by themselves, be sufficient to satisfy employers who can now give more weight to the teaching competence of the candidate. While the Doctor of Arts (D.A.) degree, with its emphasis on teacher training, has been proposed, it has not yet changed the course of educational events and the task of preparing graduate students for teaching remains within the Ph.D. programs.

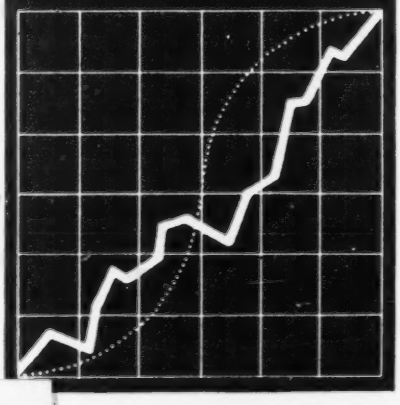
Surveys by Associate Dean George E. Hay of the U–M Graduate School found that about 53 per cent of the 1970 and 1971 graduates were employed as teachers—the major career objective among our students. In-service training arrangements are gradually coming about as a means of improving the here-and-now teaching on this campus as well, of course, for the career preparation of graduate teaching fellows.

THE STATUS OF THE TEACHING FELLOW (TF)

Graduate student teaching assistants found their place in the academic sun following World War II when they were seen as a source of cheap labor to meet expanding undergraduate enrollments. They became a relatively permanent part of the instructional force but were given little preparation for their classroom responsibilities. In fact, the very existence of these younger teachers was soft-pedalled to avoid the charge that high academic standards of instruction were being compromised. Even today some private universities are "holding the line" against graduate student teaching assistants and thus are making only a passing gesture, if that, for the career preparation of their new teachers.

Several *Memos* have dealt with the training and utilization of the graduate student TF. Our first on this theme (#13, September 1965) pointed out that close to half the undergraduate credit hours in the College of LS&A were being earned in classes taught by TFs. Training programs were largely department-based and consisted mainly of on-the-job teaching experience in multisection introductory courses.

Two years later a second report (*Memo* #21) summarized the results of a survey of the TF training programs at the 50 large universities that produce the most Ph.D.'s. It was found that a good



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training program is usually associated with (1) a demonstrated interest in teaching and TFs by key members of the senior department faculty, and (2) the successful involvement of advanced and experienced TFs as guides and mentors for first- and second-year assistants. Many of the most effective features noted in this survey were incorporated into a proposal to the Danforth Foundation which resulted in a 5-year grant of $594,000 to support an experimental training program in five LS&A departments (Botany, Physics, History, Philosophy, and Psychology).

The five-year program has been completed and the participating departments, CRLT, LS&A, and the University have learned a great deal from this concentrated attention to the orientation and preparation of the apprentice teacher. One conclusion stands out: College teaching has become so complex that the beginning teacher will nearly always benefit from a period of supervised preparation as he/she moves to the other side of the desk. It is also clear that individual departments will go about this task in quite distinctive ways. A training program, regardless of its details, will not guarantee successful teaching but it will help. This *Memo* outlines the major features for a department-based program and the institutional resources needed to support such activities.

A SURVEY OF U–M TEACHING FELLOWS

In 1970 the Senate Assembly established a special committee (chaired by Dr. Donald R. Brown) to survey the attitudes of teaching fellows in 50 different departments and divisions. Based on the responses of 550 TFs the committee reported that: three-fourths were "rather" or "very satisfied" with their situation as TFs and had no strong complaints (as a group) about the number of students for whom they were responsible; the nature of the assigned tasks; the amount of time required; and factors of space, clerical support and equipment. They did, however, indicate considerable dissatisfaction with certain aspects of their experience, namely, training opportunities for their specific teaching tasks, salary, and participation in the governance of the department.

When asked, "How valuable has your experience as a TF been as part of your graduate education?" 87 per cent rated the experience either "rather" or "very valuable." The most frequent explanation for this favorable rating was as preparation for a teaching career. While the survey showed that the TF experience is useful and satisfying, there is considerable room for improvement in the attention and effort expended by the departments in supervision and guidance.

GUIDES FOR A TRAINING PROGRAM

No single "model" for the training of teachers will go very far or last very long. If the senior faculty of a department care enough about teaching, they will find some way to meet the needs of their beginning teachers and to carry this responsibility through from one year to the next. However, if the training program is tacked on or assigned to someone "in addition to your other duties," it will probably not be successful. The orientation and preparation of the apprentice teacher, just as the quality of teaching itself will, sooner or later, reflect the reward structure of the department.

SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT BY THE DEPARTMENT

The research, surveys, and experience of CRLT indicate that the stance of the department leadership and senior faculty toward the importance of good teaching is a significant factor in the operation of an effective training program. This stance is demonstrated in several ways, viz., comparable stipend rates for TFs and research assistants, the quality of supervision available to the apprentice teacher, and the continuity of teaching-related values and programs from one year to the next. More specifically, two department-level policies have an important influence on the climate of the training program:

A Policy Statement on the Role of TFs. Considerable confusion exists among beginning teachers with respect to their role, status, responsibilities, rights, and privileges. For example, how much classroom autonomy can the TF expect? In the absence of an explicit policy statement, serious misunderstanding and bitterness may develop, or the TFs may perceive their task mainly in terms of its being simply a job or a money-earning assignment, rather than as a professional opportunity and responsibility.

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Selection. Ratings of "good teaching" often stress personal characteristics such as interest in students, enthusiasm for the subject, tolerance toward divergent opinions, and sensitivity to the feelings of students. These attributes of good teachers are not greatly changed one way or another through supervision or formal instruction on How to Be a Teacher. A department that takes advantage of this self-selection process holds a potential advantage in maintaining its standards of teaching. Ideally, therefore, the TF assignment should be given only to those students who want to teach; those who already have reason to believe that teaching is not their cup of tea should be given other responsibilities. Without other options, graduate students will claim to "have a high interest in teaching"—but mainly for income rather than as career preparation.

THE TRAINING PROGRAM ITSELF

There cannot be just one training program applied *in toto* in all departments; preparation for teaching biology, for example, is different in some respects from what is required for teaching history, or mathematics, or sociology, etc. Without compromising the significance of these differences, certain general features can be specified as points of reference for any department-based program of supervised training for the apprentice teacher.

Pre-Service Orientation. A pre-service session is the appropriate time to provide *information* needed by the new teachers about the policies and procedures that characterize the school and the department. Handbooks and reading lists might be distributed related to the nature of college teaching in general and to the special demands of teaching within the particular department. CRLT is updating its *Handbook for New Instructors* and back issues of these *Memos* are available on request (call Ms. Marcia Hughes, 763-0158). Certain journals in most of the major discipline areas give emphasis to problems and new developments in teaching. A large university provides a variety of instructional resources (media facilities, testing and examination bureaus, counseling and reading improvement centers, libraries, etc.); every teacher should know where to find and how to utilize these services. Despite the temptation to offer lectures on good teaching, the pre-service meetings serve better as orientation than as sessions on the specific skills of teaching.

In-Service Training. The beginning teacher nearly always likes to talk things over with peers; the brown-bag discussion group is an excellent setting for directing the training program since the agenda is intimately tied to concrete experiences. A formal course "covers the ground" efficiently but tends to analyze the teaching function in terms of abstract conceptual categories rather than to focus on the person-to-person interactions that concern the apprentice teacher. These group discussions (a teaching seminar) should be planned around the major objectives of the formal training program. CRLT sees the following five features as being sufficiently general to be applicable in most department-based programs. These are overlapping objectives rather than discrete units to be treated one at a time. The specific "skills of teaching," for example, are closely related to the characteristics of the teacher, the students, and the special requirements of the subject matter.

1. Acquisition of *competence in the skills of teaching* required for the initial teaching assignment—lecturing, leading a discussion group, tutoring, defining course objectives, etc. This is the kernel of the training program. The distribution of time and effort should be determined by the needs of the apprentice teacher. On-the-job training in these skills is the most essential single feature and is where the beginner who has little or no experience needs closest supervision as he combines observation with part-time teaching.

2. Discussion and demonstration of the *general techniques, procedures, and media for teaching*—the advantages and limitations of technological aids, the use of residential and community resources, role playing, the principles of good testing and evaluation, student participation in the instructional process, etc. The emphasis will vary according to the resources available and the special requirements of the discipline area,

THE TEACHING/RESEARCH CONFLICT

In the winter of 1970, Doris Miller and Patricia O'Connor conducted an interview and questionnaire survey of TFs (N = 130) and faculty (N = 51) from ten LS&A departments concerning their perception of the values assigned to teaching and research. "Ninety-five per cent [of the TF respondents] indicated that a hypothetical graduate student who was a good teacher, a good student and had completed an *outstanding dissertation* would be more respected, held in higher esteem . . . than the one who was a good student, had completed a good dissertation and was an *outstanding teacher*." Faculty responses indicated that the TFs were both accurate and realistic in their appraisal of the priority status of research in the value system at this University since 94 per cent of the faculty respondents felt "that departmental faculty would favor the outstanding researcher."

"For [many] graduate students, the academic reward system falls short in its recognition of attempts on their part to develop effective teaching skills." In fact, 64 per cent of the TF respondents felt that if the outstanding researcher and the outstanding teacher were equally respected, being the outstanding teacher would be personally more satisfying. Despite the sometimes indifference of the senior faculty to the teaching efforts of graduate students, these TFs are concerned about their competence and seek the means to improve themselves.

but the new teacher should at least know about the major resources generally used by college teachers and participate in sample demonstrations.

3. Discussion of the basic conditions for learning, motivation, and attitude and value changes of students. These topics focus more on the *student as a learner* than on the teacher as a giver of information; they link the classroom with selected contributions from psychological research and theory. The principles involved are general, but if applications and illustrations can be taken from the TF's experiences as a student and teacher, he/she will be able to distinguish superficial instructional fads from the more significant conditions that influence the academic progress of students.

4. Discussion of issues associated with the *teaching career*—academic freedom; education and social change; institutional decision making, its reward system and resistance to change. TFs are a new generation of teachers and their priority values must be recognized when they ask, for example, "How do we 'teach' self-identity?"

5. The opportunity for the beginning teacher to explore his/her beliefs about teaching with a group of equally involved peers. This is less an agenda item for the teaching seminar than a quality within the program which encourages each TF to develop a *personal style and identity* as a teacher within an atmosphere of support, understanding and trust.

Supervision. Classroom visitation by a senior member of the faculty is a traditional form of supervision but this practice was judged of "low importance" by former TFs (see results of a survey by Doris Miller in the adjacent "box"). A good training program requires considerably more constructive guidance about specific teaching practices than is customarily given. The first-year teacher needs the most supervision and help, which at this stage should stay rather close to the nuts and bolts of teaching. Discussion of more abstract issues, policies, and procedures can come later in the year, preferably in a group setting with the supervisor and other TFs. The amount of supervision for second- and third-year TFs will vary with individuals and the nature of the teaching assignment. In a cooperative and congenial atmosphere these TFs will ask for help when needed and a response from the supervisor should always be available.

A growing "supervisory" practice is to use a video-tape replay of a teacher's performance. The use of this technology reduces the dependence on classroom visitation as an arrangement for training, supervision, or evaluation. Seeing oneself at work in front of a class is not a comfortable experience for veterans and is even more disturbing for the beginner. Self-consciousness is lessened if this procedure has been agreed upon and is participated in by several members of the "viewing" group in turn. Tapes may also be available showing a more experienced teacher in action, or a selected tape vignette which demonstrates a particular aspect of teaching.

Certain advanced graduate students show considerable enthusiasm toward teaching; they have learned how to organize a body of knowledge, how to design a course, and how to present it successfully to students. They

FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION

Doris Miller at CRLT conducted surveys in 1970 and 1971 of 152 U–M alumni (with a Ph.D. or nearly so) of ten LS&A departments who were completing their first year as career teachers. In retrospect these former TFs rated the following experiences as *highly important:*

- **having total responsibility for a course they had taught**
- **preparation and delivery of a lecture**
- **designing their own exams for their students**
- **informal discussion with other TFs on teaching problems**
- **evaluation of their teaching skill by their students.**

Judged of *low importance* in their development as teachers were:

- **class visits by faculty followed by a discussion of teaching techniques**
- **taking part in pre-semester orientation which dealt with course content, course objectives, responsibilities, and techniques of teaching**
- **taking a general education course covering such topics as education psychology or psychology of learning.**

The contrast is important: "The most valued activities were those which the respondents had experienced either autonomously or with their peers," whereas those activities considered to be of low importance were those associated with formal features of a training program.

Certain general beliefs prevail—for example, over three-fourths of those who *had never been visited* believed that a faculty visit for purposes of discussing teaching techniques or for evaluation would have been a useful experience in their development as teachers. As an interesting sidelight, 25 additional respondents who had *not* been TFs as graduate students were asked, "On the whole, how helpful were the experiences you had at Michigan in preparing you to be a college teacher?" Only 28 per cent indicated that their Michigan experience was a "moderate" or "large" factor in preparing them for college teaching, compared to 84 per cent among those who had TF experience (including six per cent who checked "it couldn't be surpassed").

are good teachers and many departments have found that they perform well as advisors and consultants for first-year teachers. Their appointment to this role should be perceived as recognition of merit and one of the more genuine indications of this respect is participation in department decision making and governance.

EVALUATING A DEPARTMENT-BASED TRAINING PROGRAM

One direct way of getting information is simply to ask the TFs whether their training has been worthwhile. Feedback of this type will be more helpful if the questions call for comparisons of different features of the training program. These inquiries should be made at several points: at the end of the first and second years of apprentice teaching, and if possible, after a year or two of career teaching since the rankings of first-things-first often change as a teacher looks back on the pitfalls and peaks in his development.

One persistent source of breakdown in a department-based program is the lack of continuity in leadership from one year to the next. The senior faculty member assigned to conduct the training program will certainly favor his/her own conception of how the task should be accomplished. It is not so much a question of whether his views are right or wrong as it is of whether he is aware of the specific nature of the changes he is introducing, their effects on the participants, and his willingness to discuss and to justify the new procedures. The matter of continuity is therefore a central point for evaluation since a program can quickly become unhinged if the new director insists that everyone start from scratch and follow a new format. The leadership should, of course, change from time to time and a program must be flexible, but the transition itself requires considerable discussion and advance planning.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

The scope and the quality of a training program reflect the stance of the sponsoring department and this, in turn, is a measure of the support the institution as a whole gives to the teaching function. The first request from most departments to the central administration is for more money and, of course, there is almost no end to the ways money might be used in different departments to improve the preparation of apprentice teachers. One necessary expense is the released time of an experienced teacher and/or TF to carry out the supervisory function. In the five-year, five-department Danforth project at the U–M a significant use of central funding was to provide this

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ANALYTICAL QUESTIONS ABOUT A TRAINING PROGRAM

Dr. Frank Koen of CRLT was the prime mover in the five-year, five-department, teacher training project. His experience is neatly summarized by the following 13 questions which pinpoint specific attributes of good training programs. The answers to these questions will vary in detail from one department to another and each unit will add features that characterize its own program.

1. What is the department's explicit policy statement concerning the role, status, responsibility, and the rights and privileges of the teaching fellows?

2. Insofar as a given department is free to select only certain graduate students as its TFs, on what basis will this selection be made?

3. Who will supervise the TFs participating in the training program —faculty or senior teaching fellows or both? On what basis will these supervisors be selected? How will their participation be credited as a significant proportion of their "teaching load?"

4. What kind of reference materials are available for individual reading and/or as a basis for group discussion?

5. What are considered to be the primary skills of an undergraduate teacher and how does the training program contribute to strengthening these skills?

6. What kinds of teaching and "learning management" techniques is the training program designed to develop (e.g., open classroom, grading options, use of buzz groups, simulation and role-playing, etc.)?

7. How does the reward system within the department recognize and support the teaching function of TFs and faculty in comparison, for example, with research activities?

8. By what intra-department mechanism will continuity be maintained? By what means can each new faculty coordinator or supervisor benefit from and build on what has been learned the past year and the year before, etc.?

9. By what means will the program recognize the special needs of the individual TF?

10. What are the provisions within the program for facilitating greater autonomy and responsibility to the TF as he gains in experience?

11. What criteria will be used to assess the effectiveness of each TF? How will this information be obtained?

12. How does the department propose to utilize the other resources and units within the University relative to the preparation of the new college teacher?

13. What kind of evidence will be sought for evaluating the strengths and the weaknesses of the proposed training program?

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released time for advanced-level TFs to serve as guides and mentors for the beginning teachers. Over time, this "extra" expense should be absorbed as a normal budget commitment by the department.

A central agency, such as the Office of the Dean of the Graduate School, in cooperation with the individual departments, might consider how a TF's training and teaching performance can be made a part of his/her record. These credentials *as a teacher* should be available to prospective employers in a coherent and systematic form. A listing of specific teaching experiences, formal and/or informal training involvement, special skills and interests as a teacher, etc., would be a valuable supplement to the usual record of courses taken, grades, publications, and the like. Provision of such credentials would provide tangible evidence that the quality of teaching and the preparation of teachers are, jointly with research capabilities, matters of purposeful concern at this University.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

McKeachie, Wilbert J. *Teaching Tips: A Guidebook for the Beginning Teacher* (6th ed.). Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath & Co., 1969.

Professor McKeachie's (U–M, Psychology) *Teaching Tips* was first published in 1951 and has been a reference for beginning teachers for almost a quarter of a century. Successive editions have been updated and the current one especially contains information directly relevant to the apprentice teacher.

* * *

In recent years a number of other books have been written specifically about college teaching:

Eble, Kenneth E. *Professors as Teachers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1972.

Flournoy, Don M. & Associates *The New Teachers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1972.

Lee, Calvin B. T. (Ed.) *Improving College Teaching*. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1967.

Mann, Richard D., *et al. The College Classroom: Conflict, Change, and Learning*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1970.

CRLT INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICE

Members of the faculty are invited to call CRLT (764-0505) for information about questions or problems related to instruction. Ask for Margaret Rahn, who will record your inquiry and then give it to the appropriate specialist on the CRLT staff. We may not be able to give an immediate answer, but will check the literature and consult with others in an effort to provide the help requested; in some cases inquiries may be directed to other resource facilities or individuals on campus. Teaching is a broad topic and the Center sees this service as one means of moving toward better institutional support for the many different modes of teaching on the U–M campus and the new instructional arrangements being considered by individual members of the faculty.

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